

**Encinas Creek
Habitat Conservation Areas**
(Formerly known as the North County Habitat Bank)
(CNLM No: S041)

Annual Report
October 2009 - September 2010

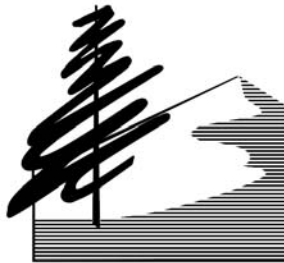
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I. INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes the management activities carried out on the Encinas Creek Habitat Conservation Areas (HCA) during the fiscal year of October 1, 2009 to September 30, 2010. The tasks and objectives discussed below are those derived from the *North County Habitat Bank Long-Term Management Plan* (Helix 2007), and the Encinas Creek Annual Work Plan 2009-2010 (CNLM 2009).

The Center for Natural Lands Management (Center or CNLM) accepted fee title and long-term stewardship responsibility of the HCA North in May of 2008. The site is also referred to as the North County Habitat Bank (NCHB). We received all our funding (Initial and Capital and Endowment) at close of escrow. The 19-acre HCA is located about ½ mile east of Interstate 5 along the south side Palomar Airport Road, east of Costco and west of Hidden Valley Road (Figure 1 and 2).

The HCA is currently being used by Westmark Development Corporation (Westmark) as a wetlands mitigation bank. Westmark is the Bank Owner and handles all credit sales and accounting. Westmark restored several acres of disturbed wetland pursuant to a restoration plan (Helix 2007b) and received regulatory signoff for final success criteria in December of 2007 (ACOE, 2007).

The HCA primarily supports southern willow scrub, but also has small patches of coastal sage scrub along its northern, western and southern perimeters. The HCA supports the state and federally-listed endangered least Bell's vireo (*Vireo belli pusillus*) (LBV) and federally-listed threatened coastal California gnatcatcher (*Poliophtila californica californica*) (CAGN).

Management includes the maintenance of existing fences and gates, biological surveys, habitat maintenance and restoration, public services, and reporting. Each of these activities and their fiscal year results are summarized below and fully described within this report.

CNLM ACTIVITY SUMMARY

- Tamarisk (*Tamarix* spp.), ice plant (*Carpobrotus edulis*), fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*) and pampas grass (*Cortaderia* spp.) sprouts and other nonnative were treated with herbicide
- LBV and CAGN surveys were conducted
- A wildlife camera was set up and run for two sessions to determine presence and use of large mammals
- Regular patrol, site enforcement and trash pickup were conducted
- Annual reports, work plans, budgets and endowment status were provided to the City of Carlsbad and the Wildlife Agencies

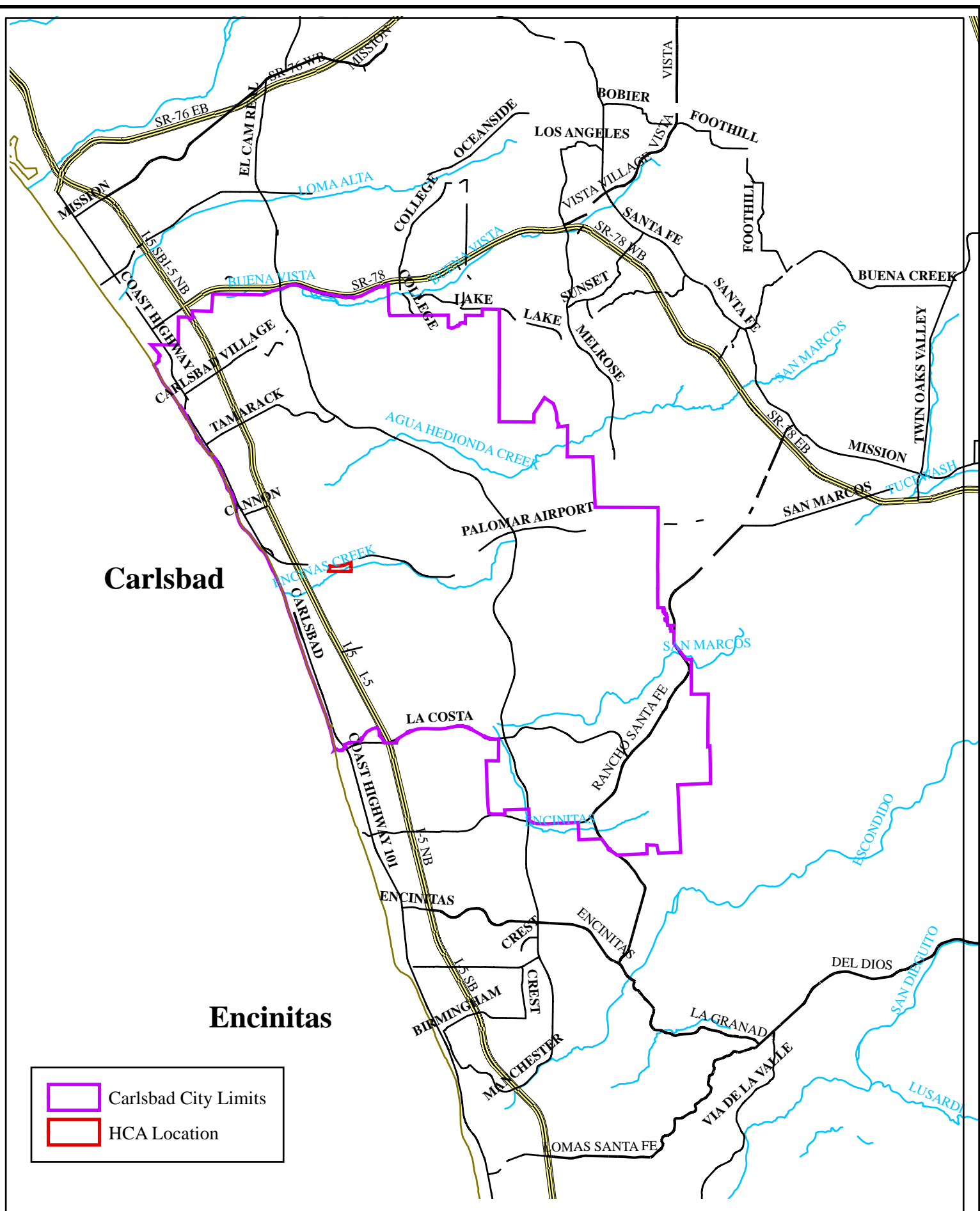


Figure 1. HCA Location

Encinas Creek (NCHB) HCA- City of Carlsbad, CA

3,800 1,900 0 3,800 Feet

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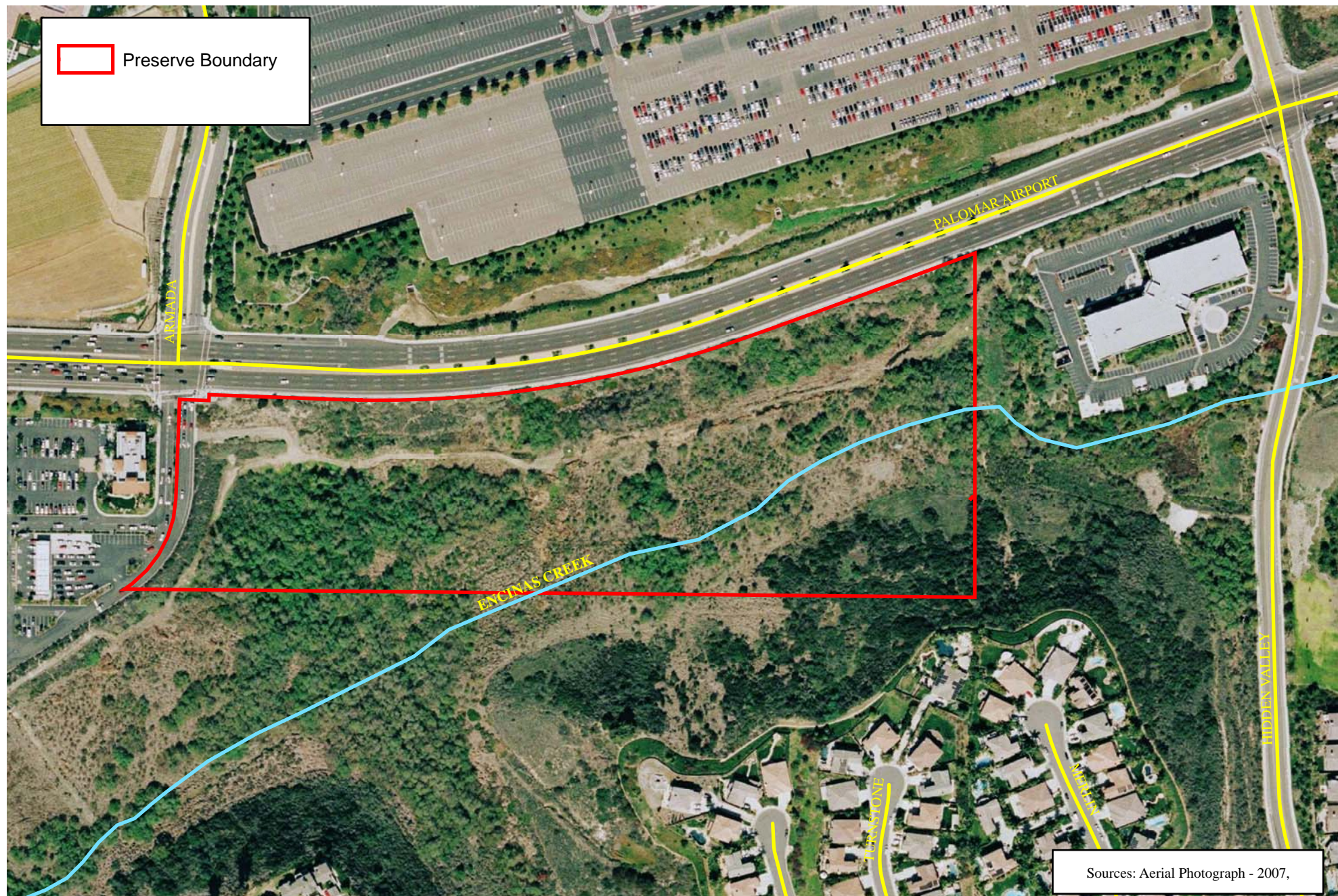


Figure 2
HCA Vicinity
Encinas Creek HCA (NCHB) - City of Carlsbad, California

110 55 0 110 Feet

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II. CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

No major capital improvements were undertaken during the year. No gates or fences were fixed or installed during this past year and no signs, gates or fences were vandalized during the past year.

III. BIOLOGICAL SURVEYS

Biological surveys for this fiscal year included sensitive bird surveys and wildlife movement monitoring. The *Management Plan* outline the goals of biological monitoring. The primary goal of the monitoring activities at this time is to collect LBV nesting data, monitor for any sign of brown-headed cowbird (*Molothrus ater*) parasitism, monitor for the presence of potential LBV predators, and monitor the changes in habitat structure. Gathering this information will allow CNLM to detect factors correlated with LBV population fluctuations that could assist in managing the HCA.

1. Least Bell's vireo, coastal California gnatcatcher and brown-headed cowbirds

CNLM observed one pair of LBV in 2008 and 3 single male and one pair in 2009. We observed one pair of LBV in 2010 (Figure 3). One additional male was observed early in the breeding season, but on only one visit and was deemed a migrant, or took up residence further west of the HCA. No LBV nests were located during surveys, nor were any family groups observed. Survey dates, times and weather conditions are shown in Table 1.

One pair of CAGN was observed within the CSS along the western slope of the HCA.

Brown-headed cowbirds were heard and observed during every site visit. Since no nests were found, it is unclear if this species had a negative effect on LBV.

Last, we observed at least three yellow-breasted chat (*Icteria virens*) territories within the HCA, which is the same number as the year before (see Figure 3). No other sensitive bird species were observed.

Table 1. LBV and CAGN survey Dates, times and weather conditions

Date	Time	Weather Conditions
April 9, 2010	06:40-8:30	Overcast, 60°F, calm
April 26, 2010	06:45-08:15	Overcast, 60°F, calm
May 10, 2010	08:00-9:00	Partly cloudy, 65°F, calm
June 10, 2010	09:00-10:15	Partly cloudy, 65°F, calm



Figure 3. Sensitive Species Observed

Encinas Creek Habitat Conservation Area-Carlsbad, CA

100 50 0 100 Feet

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2. Wildlife Cameras and other wildlife species observed

Other wildlife species observed include coyote (tracks) (*Canis latrans*), cottontail rabbit (*Sylvilagus bachmani*), pacific tree frog (*Pseudacris regilla*) and many riparian bird species.

CNLM installed a wildlife camera in 2009. There is a box mounted on a post in which we mount the camera. In 2010, we installed a camera at this location for two sessions, January 13-February 23, and April 26 to May 14. The second session was abbreviated, as by May 14 a branch grew over the camera lens and the camera took a picture every minute until the disk was full.

In 2009, this camera did not pick up much wildlife movement. However, in the winter of 2010, after VWD had cleared their easement, the number of “hits” of wildlife increased dramatically (Table 2). It is likely that the removal of the vegetation made passing through the site easier for wildlife. Most of the observations were coyote (Photograph 1) and raccoon and all movement, except for one coyote, were taken at nighttime. Raccoons were seen many times in groups of 2-5 individuals (Photograph 2).

Table 1 – Summary of Wildlife Movement*

Camera Location:	Number of Photographs January 13-February 23 (40 days)	Number of Photographs April 26 to May 14 (15 days)
Species:		6
Coyote	23	
Raccoon	45	1
Cottontail Rabbit	4	

*number of photographs by animal per site per survey period



Photograph 1. Coyote



Photograph 2. Raccoon family.

3. Plant Species and Vegetation Communities

No vegetation monitoring program was planned for this fiscal year. No new sensitive species were observed during bird surveys.

IV. HABITAT MAINTENANCE AND RESTORATION

Habitat maintenance and restoration goals include controlling and removing nonnative and invasive plants. During this past year the primary species removed were pampas grass sprouts. Less than 15 sprouts were treated or removed. We also sprayed several patches of ice plant and a few fennel that were observed. The site does not have a problem with invasive nonnative plant species. Although some occur, they are easily removed and are not a current threat to the preserve.

HCA Threats

The Center regularly monitors and reports on primary threats to the HCA (Table 1). This information is gathered to list, describe and discuss management actions (current and future) for the highest priority threats to the HCA's integrity. The threats table is updated annually and included in each annual report.

V. PUBLIC SERVICE

Public service activities include patrolling in an attempt to control dumping and associated vandalism. In addition, public services include trash pickup and meeting with neighboring homeowners who have questions or concerns in regards to the HCA.

We patrolled approximately once per month during the fiscal year. During each visit, we surveyed for illegal activities, picked up trash, and nonnative, treated or removed nonnative invasive plants. No vandalism, dumping, or illegal activities occurred this past year.

CNLM staff also attended the City of Carlsbad's Habitat Management Plan (HMP) annual meeting to report data from this site and other CNLM sites in Carlsbad.

In the summer/fall of 2008, the Vallecitos Water District (VWD) was removing vegetation as part of the maintenance of their sewer line access road. During this activity, they impacted about ½ acre of southern willow scrub within the preserve. A site meeting was held with the Army Corps of Engineers, California Department of Fish and Game and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (collectively "agencies"). As a result of this meeting, VWD was required to mitigate at a ratio of about 5:1. The mitigation is going to be habitat enhancement of existing southern willow scrub in Carlsbad. The mitigation site chosen was CNLM's La Costa Greens site. CNLM and VWD have finalized this agreement and work commenced in the winter of 2009. The areas impacted on-site have re-grown.

Table 3: HCA Threats

Threat	Location	Size or Severity	Actions 2009-2010 Management Year	Planned Actions
Weeds				
Fennel (<i>Foeniculum vulgare</i>) H	Near the entrance to the HCA	Less than 20 individuals	About 15 individuals were treated	Continue to treat as necessary
Black Mustard (<i>Brassica nigra</i>)	Located in coastal sage scrub near southeast corner of HCA	About ¼ acre in size	Nothing	CNLM will treat this infestation in 2011
Pampas grass (<i>Cortaderia</i> spp.) H	Located in the riparian habitat	Only a few sprouts each year	Treated with herbicide.	Will continue to treat with herbicide.
Saltcedar (<i>Tamarix</i> spp.) H	Located in the riparian habitats in both HCAs.	Only a few sprouts each year	Treated with herbicide	Will continue to treat with herbicide
Other				
Unwanted Trespass and Vandalism	HCA	Minimal	Installed signs	Continue patrols
Trash and Debris	Mostly near western entrance	Minimal	Remove trash and debris when observed.	Remove as observed

CNLM staff met with VWD staff in the winter of 2010 prior to the vegetation clearing efforts. As a result, there were no unanticipated impacts from these clearing efforts. CNLM appreciated the coordination effort by VWD.

VI. REPORTING

Reporting includes all data analysis, Geographic Information System (GIS) entry and analysis and remote sensing, regional coordination, photo documentation activities and budget and financial status.

- a. **Annual Work Plan.** An annual work plan for the next fiscal year has been developed and submitted to the wildlife agencies and the City of Carlsbad in October of 2010.
- b. **Annual Reports.** This report represents the second full annual report for the property and will be submitted to the City of Carlsbad and wildlife agencies.
- c. **Management Plan.** The management plan created by Helix will be used for several more years. It will likely be updated in about 2-4 years.
- d. **Budgets/Finances:** The total budget spent during this fiscal year was \$12,471 of a planned budget of \$16,817. We spent less than planned mostly because some of our tasks didn't cost as much as expected, and we were trying to save money as a result of the

current financial crisis in the United States. The total preserve management funds remaining at this time are \$454,010 (Table 3).

Table 3. Endowment Status

Project	Inception Date	Original Endowment	Endowment as of 10/30/10	Initial and Capital as of 10/30/10	Total Preserve Funds	Inflation Adjusted Endowment as of 10/30/10
Encinas Creek	5/2008	\$427,004	\$406,604	\$47,406	\$454,010	\$425,862

VII. SUMMARY & DISCUSSION

Third year management was successful at building baseline biological data, removing nonnative plants and animals, and developing a better understanding of the HCA and its regional context. Management in the next year will be similar to the management during the first few years.

VIII. REFERENCES

ACOE, 2007. North County Habitat Bank Success Criteria Determination. Department of the Army. December 17, 2007.

CNLM 2009. Encinas Creek Habitat Conservation Area Annual Work Plan 2009-2010. Center for Natural Lands Management. October 2009.

Helix, 2007. North County Habitat Bank Long-Term Management Plan. Helix Environmental Planning, Inc. December 28, 2007.

Helix, 2007b. North County Habitat Bank Final Wetland Restoration Plan. Helix Environmental Planning, Inc. April 30, 2007.